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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0971
INFO RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0078
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0013
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 0011
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0015
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 0123
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 0026
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 0149
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS BELMOPAN 000715

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SUBJECT: BELMOPAN: UPDATE ASSESSMENTS ON CENTRAL AMERICA SECURITY REQUIREMENTS

REF: (A) STATE 163495; (B) BELMOPAN 494

¶1. In response to ref A, post has reviewed our earlier assessment of security requirements and continues to believe that border security, gang prevention and anti-corruption measures are the top priorities for Belize. Since ref B was sent there have been some indications that MS-13 is growing stronger here than initially thought, adding some urgency to gang prevention.

¶2. We have several police equipment wish lists that the GOB has given us over the past year. While we strongly support a strengthening of the criminal justice system as a whole, including police, judiciary and penal system, we have not so far found the equipment lists to be that convincing or practical, focusing as they do on capabilities or infrastructure that do not strike us as appropriate to the situation Belize finds itself in.

¶3. The Belize National Coast Guard is moving forward on a step-by-step infrastructure development plan with SOUTHCOM assistance that is well-conceived and effective. For the next year or so the BNCG will have its hands full managing the new infrastructure projects, but in the out years there will be a need for additional equipment and vetting to make the best use of the new forward operating bases and headquarters.

¶4. Since ref B was written we have become aware of some additional needs of the Belize Defense Force that will help it fulfill its mission of supporting civilian law enforcement. One area where the BDF suffers from lack of equipment is air assets. The BDF air wing now consists of a single twin-engine Defender aircraft. We have been asked informally about providing a Cessna Caravan, a type of aircraft widely used here, which would improve the BDF's ability to do air patrols in support of drug interdiction and search and rescue. Vetting for a new BDF unit that is being created is also on the Commander's wish list.

¶5. Regarding border measures, we have a study done by the International Organization for Migration proposing a program to upgrade border information systems. The cost was in excess of \$100,000 but this would need to be reviewed and updated.

DIETER